



Encircling Sgt. 1st Class Carey Williams' African wood carving are "historical soldiers" (from left) Navy Sr. Chief Petty Officer Frederick Simpson (Indian War); Army Staff Sgt. Michael Pace (Civil War); Army Sgt. 1st Class Norma Ewers (Spanish-American War); Army Lt. Col. Lorenzo Spencer (Korean War); and Air Force Tech. Sgt. Walter Ingram (Vietnam War).

## 'History Full of Soul'

# Stuttgart celebrates African-American heritage

Story & photos by Maria Higgins

Buffalo soldiers roamed past African artifacts, purple-draped butterflies danced in the spotlight and centuries of history played out on the walls as African-American History Month (or, interchangeably, Black History Month) was celebrated Feb. 21 in the Patch Barracks Community Club.

More than 175 community members turned out for the annual event, which was anchored by a traditional buffet-style feast of collard greens, black-eyed peas and other ethnic dishes.

A regiment of soldiers in period uniform patrolled the room, reminding attendees of the pivotal contributions African-American service members made during the Indian, Spanish-American, Civil, Korean and Vietnam wars.

Army Capt. Wendy Rivers, the event's chairperson, offered what was left of her voice as she performed master-of-ceremony duties. "We were here until 11:30 last night setting up and decorating," Rivers explained.

The resulting displays of Kente cloth, books, artwork and other memorabilia reflected community-wide contributions, she said.

Entertainment included a sign-language demonstration set to music by first-graders Brittany Rivers and Jalyn Prewitt; a modern dance performance by eighth-graders Latoya Tidwell and Tavana Traylor and seventh-grader Latanya Tidwell; a recitation of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech; and Cynthia Marie Tidwell's rendition of "Lift Every Voice and Sing."

This year's program was co-sponsored by Defense Infor-



After her sign-language performance for African-American History Month, Brittany Rivers presents a rose to Jackie Sims, her after-school care provider.

mation Systems Agency and the 6th Area Support Group Equal Opportunity Program.

The event, themed "History Full of Soul – Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow," continued a tradition begun in 1926, when noted scholar Carter G. Woodson nominated the second week of February as Negro History Week, primarily because the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln fall then.

## Pentagon goes 'on the road' for cultural events

Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample  
American Forces Press Service

Looking to improve its business practices and esprit de corps organization-wide, the Department of Defense celebrated its headquarters-level African-American History Month events on the road this year.

"Traditionally, African-American History Month [and other observances] were celebrated with a 30-minute program where we spoke to folks who worked in the Pentagon, and then returned to our desks," said Charles Abell, principal deputy undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness. "We didn't think that was a good way of doing business."

Abell made these comments during a two-day exposition and symposium at Tougaloo (Miss.) College, the final event in the DoD's month-long observance of National African-American History Month.

Examples of achievement by African-Americans within DoD were made evident by dozens of military officers, Pentagon executives and staffers in attendance.

One such attendee was Command Sgt. Maj. Michele S. Jones, the first black woman command sergeant major of the U.S. Army Reserve. Jones said the nation's largest employer provides everyone with the chance to succeed.

"The Department of Defense is one of the institutions that can really stand behind its numbers in terms of equal opportunities – more so than in private industries," Jones said. "And I am an example of that – but I succeeded based on merit. I am a command sergeant major, I'm a woman, I'm black – and so I'm really pro-DoD."

Addressing a small gathering in the Tougaloo Chapel, Abell noted the significance of the place where civil-rights legends once stood.

"I'm humbled to stand at this podium where Martin Luther King Jr. stood, where Medger Evers, Dick Gregory, Julian Bond stood. When they stood here, they called for equal rights, justice, freedom and opportunity ... It is important to note that the Department of Defense champions those same values as well."

## African-American resources online

The following are just a few of the myriad Web sites dedicated to African-American history, culture and community:

Biography.com Celebrates Black History  
[www.biography.com/blackhistory](http://www.biography.com/blackhistory)

Boston Museum of Afro-American History  
[www.afroammuseum.org](http://www.afroammuseum.org)

Charles H. Wright  
Museum of African-American History  
[www.maah-detroit.org](http://www.maah-detroit.org)

The Encyclopedia Britannica  
Guide to Black History  
<http://search.eb.com/blackhistory>

Gateway to African-American History  
(U.S. Dept. of State)  
<http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/blackhis>